

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 032454

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, XF, EGEN

SUBJECT: THREATENED BOYCOTT OF MPEAA FILMS

REF: JIDDA 0767; STATE 017173

1. MPEAA HAS JUST RECEIVED FOLLOWING CABLE FROM ITS REPRESENTATIVE, MARC SPIEGEL, WHO ATTENDED BAHRAIN TELEVISION CONFERENCE:

QUOTE: THIRD TELEVISION COORDINATION CONFERENCE FOR THE GULF AREA WAS ATTENDED BY 21 DELEGATES FROM SAUDI ARABIA, STATE OF KUWAIT, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, STATE OF QATAR, THE SULTANATE OF OMAN, AND THE STATE OF BAHRAIN. DELEGATES WERE ALL HEADS OF STATIONS, PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND HIGH-LEVEL FUNCTIONARIES OF RESPECTIVE MINISTRIES OF INFORMATION. CONFERENCE WAS ALSO ATTENDED BY SECRETARY GENERAL OF ARAB STATES BROADCASTING UNION AND THE UNESCO REGIONAL EXPERTS FOR BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION FOR THE ARAB STATES. BOTH OF THESE LATTER-MENTIONED DELEGATES CAME FROM CAIRO.

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-- IN ORDER TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO THIS CONFERENCE, ALL DELEGATES INCLUDING MYSELF WERE OFFICIALLY RECEIVED AND WELCOMED FIRST BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND THEN BY HIS HIGHNESS, THE AMIR OF THE STATE OF BAHRAIN. THE

CONFERENCE WAS OPENED BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND SUBSEQUENTLY CHAIRED BY SHAIKH ISA MOHAMMAD AL-KHALIFA, THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.

-- THE CONFERENCE WAS SCHEDULED TO LAST THREE DAYS, OF WHICH THE FIRST DAY'S TWO SESSIONS, LASTING OVER TEN HOURS, WERE SOLELY DEVOTED TO THE RELATIONSHIP OF ALL THE STATIONS WITH MPEAA MEMBER COMPANIES. I WAS REQUESTED TO ADDRESS THE FULL CONFERENCE WHICH WAS FOLLOWED BY A ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION. THIS SPECIFIC SESSION STARTED AT 4:00 IN THE AFTERNOON AND FINISHED AT 10:30 IN THE EVENING.

-- I WAS COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL IN MY MISSION TO FULLY COUNTER THE ALLEGATIONS OFFICIALLY SPELLED OUT IN THE LENGTHY PAPER PRESENTED TO THE CONFERENCE BY DR. AL-SHUBAILI, THE GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE SAUDI TELEVISION, THAT THE PRICE RAISES WERE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED BECAUSE OF THE INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF OIL. I PRESENTED CONVINCING FACTS AND FIGURES SHOWING THAT THIS WAS A PURELY ECONOMIC MOVE AND NOTHING ELSE. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE TRADING PRACTICES OF OUR MEMBER COMPANIES WAS MY SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION IN DEFEATING A PLAN ALSO OFFICIALLY PRESENTED TO THE CONFERENCE WHICH CALLED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BUYING CARTEL FOR TELEVISION PROGRAMS FOR THE ENTIRE GULF AREA. THE PLAN CALLED FOR DR. AL-SHUBAILI TO BE THE OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED BUYER FOR ALL THE STATIONS IN THE AREA. HE WAS TO

HAVE BEEN GIVEN FULL AUTHORITY AS TO THE CHOICE OF PROGRAMS AS WELL AS PRICES. THIS PLAN WAS OFFICIALLY DEFEATED AND SO EMBODIED IN A RESOLUTION PASSED AT THE CONFERENCE. I HAD OCCASION TO CONVINCE THE HEADS OF THE STATIONS OF KUWAIT AND QATAR AT DINNER THE NIGHT BEFORE THE CONFERENCE STARTED THAT THE ENVISAGED PLAN CONFIDENTIAL

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WAS TO EVERYONE'S DISADVANTAGE. BOTH OF THESE GENTLEMEN, I.E., MESSRS. AL-SANOUSSE AND MARAQAH, MANOUEVERED VERY ABLY IN THE OFFICIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE TO HELP IN THE DEFEAT OF THE CARTEL PLAN.

-- ONE OTHER NOTE OF INTEREST IS THAT THE RTV STATION WHICH WAS BANKRUPT HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY TAKEN OVER BY THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE MINISTER OF

INFORMATION AT THE OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE. UNQUOTE

2. MPEAA PLEASED THAT SPIEGEL VISIT WAS APPARENTLY SO
SUCCESSFUL IN BLOCKING SHUBAILI'S EFFORT. DEPARTMENT
APPRECIATE'S EMBASSY'S PROMPT REPORTING, WHICH ENABLED
US PERSUADE MPEAA TO TAKE MATTER SERIOUSLY AND SEND

EFFECTIVE, WELL-BRIEFED REPRESENTATIVE TO BAHRAIN
CONFERENCE. WHILE NO FURTHER ACTION APPEARS
NECESSARY, DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE A REPORT IF
ANY ADDRESSEE POST RECEIVES FROM OTHER PARTICIPANTS
AN ACCOUNT OF THE CONFERENCE WHICH VARIES SIGNIFICANTLY
FROM SPIEGEL CABLE. INGERSOLL

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